

REMARKS

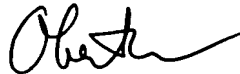
Claims 1-30 are pending in this application. By this Amendment, the Abstract is amended. No new matter is added.

The specification is objected to because of informalities in the Abstract. The Abstract is amended to address these alleged errors. Withdrawal of the objection to the specification is respectfully requested.

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that this application is in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration and prompt allowance of claims 1-30 are earnestly solicited.

Should the Examiner believe that anything further would be desirable in order to place this application in even better condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number set forth below.

Respectfully submitted,



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ABSTRACT

An optical path switching method ~~according to the present invention comprises~~ includes converging and irradiating, on a light absorption layer film provided in a thermal lens forming element ~~(1, 2, 3)~~ including at least the ~~light absorption layer film~~, each of a control light ~~(121, 122, 123)~~ having a wavelength selected from a wavelength band which is absorbed by the ~~light absorption layer film~~ and a signal light ~~(110, 111, 112)~~ having a wavelength selected from a wavelength band which is not absorbed by the ~~light absorption layer film~~. ~~Arrangement of the light absorption layer film is adjusted such that at least the control light focuses within the light absorption layer film.~~ A thermal lens is reversibly formed according to a distribution of refraction index created by a temperature increase generated in and around an area of the ~~light absorption layer film~~ in which the control light is absorbed, ~~such that, according to whether or not the control light is irradiated,~~ the ~~The~~ converged signal light is output either ~~as is in its converged form or after its spread angle is changed-changed.~~ and a A mirror ~~(61, 62, 63)~~ including includes a hole and ~~reflecting means,~~ reflector where the signal light output ~~from the thermal lens forming element~~ is either passed through the hole or reflected by ~~the reflecting means to change the optical path~~ reflector.